

Harrison Internet Committee Meeting Summary 11-9-23

Present: Pat Voermans, Steve Incha, Bob Bushman, Sue Dierksen, Tim McFadden, Katie Hanson, Mike Stearns, Roger Westphal

Meeting time 1pm-2:46 PM

Harrison Township initiatives to obtain broadband services Review

This Harrison Internet Committee was formed nearly two years ago at the direction of our Town Board Chairman because access to reliable high-speed internet is vital to our future. Our purpose was to promote broadband, educate ourselves and the community. Our group has been a driving force in moving the County forward on this issue.

1. Funding Streams

- a. **FCC – Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF)** dollars allocated to Internet Service Providers (ISP's) through a bidding process were awarded to Charter/Spectrum to cover many census tracts in Lincoln County including all of Harrison. They are to start work soon and have six years to complete bringing fiber to the homes in their allocated areas.

- RDOF Map

- <https://maps.psc.wi.gov/apps/Rdof/>

- b. **National Telecommunication and Information Administration (NTIA)** has a \$42 billion dollar grant for the states called the Broadband Equity access and Deployment (**BEAD**) program. A five-year action plan is required and must be developed by counties and state to become eligible to receive those funds. The funds are intended to bring high-speed internet to the unserved and underserved, primarily in rural areas. The plan must include clear goals with regional, county and community collaboration as well as a process for oversight and accountability.

2. Lincoln County recently established a Broadband Commission with a goal of giving all residents access to high-speed internet. A rough draft of the plan is being reviewed and can be accessed here.

https://www.lincolncountyedc.org/files/ugd/c6dfc2_bf2bc7e38a784a22a3f02be921a8093d.pdf

The Broadband Commission is part of the Lincoln County Economic Corporation which recently hired a new Director Elsa Duranceau. (www.lincolncountyedc.org) She is developing a web page that will contain all of the Broadband Commission activities.

Note, the plan index has a “Rapid Design Study” that reveals the areas needing coverage outside the FCC grantees. It gives information about broadband coverage options with cost predictions for installing broadband in the County. There will be a presentation to the Commission in the near future.

Notes from a recent conference by UWEX

- Wisconsin Counties Association Video– a persuasive 10 minute presentation why internet is critical for our future
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ULJUjdOY4QI>
- Broadband toolkit
<https://economicdevelopment.extension.wisc.edu/articles/what-data-do-you-need-for-broadband-planning/#broadband-availability>

More Speed Testing is being promoted: Keep testing often and at different times of the day to hold companies accountable for the speeds they advertise. Ideas (Put flyers in the bars in the area again. Redesign poster for Harrison with fewer words and a border to draw in attention. The Commission is looking at putting the speed-test information in the tax bills County-wide.

3. Public Service Commission (PSC) has grant dollars. Frontier Communication approached the Commission for support of their proposal request a grant from PSC. They propose to bring fiber to 468 eligible locations in the Town of Corning and the Town of Pine River
4. Charter/ Spectrum status. No recent update. Harrison is on the path to start fiber in 2025 the last we heard
5. Community Outreach - Facebook page
6. Next County Commission meeting is Nov 30 at 6:30 pm

Useful Links via Economic Development

Wisconsin Public Service Broadband Office

<https://psc.wi.gov/Pages/ServiceType/Broadband.aspx>

<https://psc.wi.gov/Pages/ServiceType/Broadband/CPFInfrastructure.aspx>

Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) Map

<https://maps.psc.wi.gov/apps/Rdof/>

Lincoln County Internet Speed Test

<https://co.lincoln.wi.us/bc-bc>

Broadband Planning Presentations by PSC/UW-Extension
<https://economicdevelopment.extension.wisc.edu/topics/broadband/>

Economic Development Website
<https://www.lincolncountyedc.org/>

Wisconsin Counties Association Video (Mentioned at the meeting on why broadband is important)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ULJUjdOY4QI>

UWExtension links

Broadband Toolkit (Mentioned during the meeting, good information on broadband)

<https://economicdevelopment.extension.wisc.edu/articles/what-data-do-you-need-for-broadband-planning/#broadband-availability>

Lincoln County Broadband Plan Drafted by Northcentral Regionally Planning

https://www.lincolncountyedc.org/files/ugd/c6dfc2_bf2bc7e38a784a22a3f02be921a8093d.pdf

Submitted by
Pat Voermans